President’s Message

WHY POD? WHY NOW?

In Houston, I tried to connect my welcome address to our conference theme, “Welcoming Change: Generation and Regeneration.” I would like to use my final column to reiterate the five points I made about why POD plays an important role in higher education today and how it can sustain that role in higher education in the future.

In an e-world, we need to have the ability to respond quickly and to remove things that block progress. Whether we are dealing with the need to locate and use information, an instructional crisis, a student at risk, a disheartened teacher, or any of several other situations demanding our attention, the ability to access reliable, useful resources can mean the difference between success and failure. On our campuses, the staff of teaching and learning centers respond in this way, and with an added personal touch. But professional organizations are also vehicles for rapid response. The POD listserve is an example of an accessible resource that provides rapid response to questions or requests for help.

Instruction, assessment, evaluation, and professional development require a range of useful information from multiple sources. Blending these data provides the most clear and complete picture and supports effective decision making in evaluation, professional enrichment, curricular decision making, and organizational development. Through POD, one can locate individuals with expertise relevant to specific needs, and practical recommendations for effective practice.

Feedback and follow-up are essential to understanding and promoting learning, growth, or progress. But data alone are not enough. As several studies have shown, learning, growth, and change occur when performance data are accompanied by assistance from a knowledgeable other and when resources for support are present. Beyond the immediate gains, are additional benefits of ongoing follow-up and assistance, and the important ability to ask questions for clarification. Here is yet another reason to strongly argue for the creation and sustenance of teaching centers, professional development resources, and related services. They are the sources of knowledgeable feedback that supports growth and improvement. For the sake of maintaining the health of our academic enterprise, we should be paying more attention to multiple indicators of effectiveness, we should be providing people with more understandable information, and we should be offering more expert assistance in using that information to foster improvements and/or to make important professional life decisions.

As the demand for accountability in higher education grows, it becomes more and more important to be able to gather and use valid and reliable information, and to develop programs and processes that support and sustain faculty vitality rather than constraining.

— Continued on page 2
Notes from the POD Office

Registrations for the Fall 2009 conference in Houston exceeded expectations with 627 attending. Many people had to make tough decisions regarding their attendance due to serious economic challenges, both personal and institutional. Thanks to all who attended!

Work on the 2010 conference in St. Louis (Nov. 3-7) has already begun in earnest thanks to the efforts of Shaun Longstreet and Suzanne Tapp, Conference Co-Chairs and Michael Palmer and Martin Springborg, Program Co-Chairs. The conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis Riverfront. The POD group rate is $149 per night for single or double occupancy. Stay tuned for more details.

A reminder to all committee chairs, subcommittee chairs, or anyone engaged in official POD work: please feel free to reserve an online meeting via Elluminate, the virtual classroom. It’s free to POD members but space is available on a first-come, first-served basis. If interested, or if you have questions, send me an email: podoffice@podnetwork.org.

Congratulations to the five newly elected Core members and also to Phyllis Dawkins, our next President Elect. 2010’s already looking like a great year!

– President, continued from page 1

it or creating roadblocks to success. In that sense, evaluation is an important part of the continuous sequence of events that promote improvement. We should promote effective evaluation of our services as well as evaluation of instructional and institutional effectiveness. The more we can document the value of our services, the stronger we are. Professional organizations can use this kind of information to build databases and arguments in support of centers and their staff. POD is working toward this goal with the many new projects that were discussed at the conference.

POD has a unique strength: its attention to the human issues and values that are part of its history and its spirit. I think there is a message for our professional practice here. It is that we can never forget that teaching and learning, perhaps more correctly, teachers and learners are the focus of our work. Whether the topic is student centeredness, professional development, evaluation, assessment, or any of several others, people matter. Think of what we do as a human resources activity. I mean this in the sense that our efforts ultimately turn toward supporting people. Whether it’s a face-to-face consultation with a faculty member, a workshop for a group, a presentation at POD, or a quantitative piece of research, the intent is to add something that will bring a return in terms of supporting the growth and development of individuals.

The theme of our conference was “Welcoming Change: Generation and Regeneration.” There are surely changes we must face and changes we can make. But regeneration will not come from change itself. Rather, it will come from facing change, being receptive to new ideas, seeking useful information, working with others, planning a course of action, being flexible, and continuously monitoring progress. This is most easily done when one has a core of experienced and helpful colleagues to turn to for information and assistance. These are difficult economic times for many of us and for our institutions. We will have to change and adapt, but we will recover and we will regenerate. And I know that this organization and the people in it will continue provide the kind of collegial support that makes recovery possible even in difficult times.

That’s WHY POD … WHY NOW.

– Michael Theall, President, POD

Save the Date

35th Annual POD Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A., November 3-7, 2010

– Hoag Holmgren, Executive Director
Core Committee Elected

POD welcomes 2010-2013 Core members

Congratulations to the five new Core Committee members and sincere thanks to the 12 candidates for their willingness to serve and guide the POD Network in Higher Education.

Core Committee Class of 2013

Derek Bruff  
Vanderbilt University

Deandra Little  
University of Virginia

Dakin Burdick  
Endicott College

Kevin M. Johnson  
Michigan State University

Angela R. Linse  
The Pennsylvania State University

Phyllis Worthy Dawkins  
POD’s next President Elect

The officers of the POD Network are President, Past-President, and President Elect. Currently, Mike Theall is President, Peter Felton is President Elect and Virginia Lee is Past President. The President Elect is elected by the Core Committee at its meeting in October. Each of these three officers then succeed to the next position at the completion of their term (at the conclusion of the Core Meeting in March), each serving a total of three years. The election process is explained in detail in the POD Governance Manual, available on the POD website.

Books by POD members


Thoughts on the 2009 POD Conference

“This was one of the most comfortable conferences I have ever attended because of everyone’s kindness and enthusiasm as they introduced me to the field of faculty development. I look forward to continuing to learn from my colleagues at Ohio State and those in the field as I grow as a faculty developer and scholar.” Kathryn Linder.

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POD has gone Wiki!

POD has a new knowledge building repository, called “WikiPODia”, the new resource is built to capture and organize scholarly content written and reviewed by POD members and to make it easy for members to find, use, and contribute to that knowledge. The wiki format combines the ease of blogging with the universal access of a website.

In November of 2008, the Wiki Working Group, an ad-hoc group from the Electronic Communications and Resources Committee (ECRC), was charged with developing, promoting, and monitoring WikiPODia. After exploring options, we decided that Google Sites was the best option for starting WikiPODia, with the possibility of transitioning it to a member’s only area of the POD website in the future.

WikiPODia is not a replacement for the POD listserv, but rather another way of organizing and sharing the useful information and resources discussed on the list. We often see questions posed to the listserv that start with, “I know this was discussed previously on the list serve, but I can’t find it.” Now, with WikiPODia, when POD members start interesting discussions on the listserv, they can follow up by posting summaries, findings, or resources on WikiPODia, where topics are easily searched and added to.

WikiPODia is also a tremendous way to increase collaboration among POD members. For example, if you see a topic on WikiPODia that is interesting and you have a couple of ideas to develop the page further, you are encouraged to contact the page owner and see about making revisions. You might, for example, add a video or a hyperlink to another site.

By the time of the POD conference in October, WikiPODia was up and running with several topics already developed and more topics being developed. As the conference continued, many presenters uploaded their information and handouts, making it easier than ever before for those who could not attend to gather more information on sessions presented at the conference. So if you missed the session on clicker pedagogies or the one on full-time non-tenure faculty, or any other of a number of sessions, you can find resources from them in the “POD Conference 2009” section of WikiPODia.

WikiPODia already has a number of topic areas, including classroom management, creating and assessing faculty development programs, dealing with email, helping your faculty to optimize the first day of class, and flu pandemic preparation. The list is growing, but we know there are many topics that have not been addressed yet. If you would like to be a lead contributor and start a topic, the Wiki Working Group has designed several pages to help you get started.

It should be noted that WikiPODia is viewable by anyone in the world; however, only POD members will be able to contribute to the site. As a result, it is necessary to begin your contribution by submitting the form found on the WikiPODia home page: http://tinyurl.com/wikipodia or www.bitly.com/wikipodia. Once your POD membership is verified, we ask that you set up a Google account using the e-mail address that you listed on the form. The WikiPODia administrators will provide you access and you will be able to develop your own page. We do ask that you follow the Ground Rules and Guidelines as well as subsequent information about the page format and directions for adding a new page to WikiPODia.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch with any of the WikiPODia administrators: Ben McFadyen (bmcfadyen@elon.edu), David Sacks (Davidsacks@uky.edu), or Eli Collins-Brown (ecollinbrown@mcon.edu).
Mary Lynn Crow is a Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Texas at Arlington. She teaches in the Curriculum and Instruction Department within the College of Education where she has taught since 1969. She attended the first P.O.D. conference at Airlie House, Virginia, in 1976. This interview took place on Sept. 5, 2007.

Burdick: How did you get started in faculty development?
Crow: I have been at the University of Texas in Arlington for about 37 years. Just as I received my promotion to associate professor, I was selected or asked by the Provost at the university to start a faculty instructional development center. At that time there were none in Texas and very few in the country. So it was kind of like starting from scratch. That was 1973. The center existed from 1973 to 1985 when budget cuts at the university forced it to close. Since that time I have served as dean of my college and I am a tenured full professor. But the thing that I think makes my career interesting is even though there has been no faculty instructional development centers since that year, I do still teach people on the campus the same things I did before, but I do it with release time on campus. So I still maintain my duties, research and teaching as a full professor but in addition to that I also teach university faculty members and graduate assistants and new candidates how to teach.

Burdick: What kind of services do you offer?
Crow: Okay, let me go back first. During those years when the faculty development resource center existed, we had a huge organization. We had annual retreats for faculty. We had annual five day training sessions for all new GTAs and TAs. We had a library that was I believe unparalleled in the country. It was half of the university’s library with every kind of volume on every kind of thing that would be helpful to faculty. We had an international newsletter. We provided grants for improvements, faculty development improvements. We did all of the faculty evaluation services for the entire campus. We did weekly faculty projects, which would be on different topics of interest to faculty. And I did individual work with faculty members if either they requested it or their chair or dean requested it. That was a pretty full service and I ran it by myself with an assistant/secretary and sometimes a couple of student workers.

Next week I will have a session for the entire campus, which I do once a month. All the new faculty members pretty much come, but a lot of the old timers do also. Next week it will be on techniques for handling controversial issues in the classroom. I will present about five different techniques and demonstrate them for the faculty who attend. We also have on our campus an organization to which one is elected called the Academy of Distinguished Teachers. It is an honorary group of professors who have received the highest teaching awards on campus, and I am currently serving as the President of that group. We do things on campus for the growth and development, if you will, of instruction on campus.

Burdick: Do you still do consultations with individual faculty?
Crow: Occasionally. Mostly new faculty. By the way, I am a licensed clinical psychologist with a private practice, but my Ph.D. is in both education and psychology. So I have my full professorship in education, but I also teach the psychology courses. And during the summer when I am not teaching education, I'm hired by the College of Business Administration to teach all of their doctoral candidates who plan to move into professorships when they graduate. So I work with a lot of groups on campus not just as a whole but individually. But it's a labor of love now, because the truth is one course release time is not a lot.

Burdick: Of course.

Crow: P.O.D. was founded in 1976. Joan North was the first Executive Director and the focus of the group that Joan led was more or less a support network. They were very influential people in professional, organizational development, and faculty development, but they met primarily because they needed to share resources and support one another. That's kind of the genesis of what happened. I was elected the first Executive Director. But that's what we now call the President. We went from Coordinator to Executive Director. The organization was run by an Executive Director and a Core Committee of 21 members. One of the first areas of major concern was that part of this first group wanted P.O.D. to become an international professional association and the other part of the group wanted to keep it more small and focused on the personal support, as well as professional. There was tension between those two sections as to which direction the organization would go. Joan was pretty much on the side...
of personal support and I was more on the side of professional association. If my memory is correct the transition took place at an American Association of Higher Education meeting in March 1976. For many years P.O.D. had two meetings. The first would be as an offshoot of AAHE in Chicago every year in March. Our second was our annual P.O.D. conference, which was held in different places and that was always held in October. So whatever else we did through the years we would always meet in March and in October. But that March meeting was when we made strong efforts to try to resolve what was going to be the future of P.O.D.

Bill Bergquist nominated me to be the Executive Director, a new direction for the organization. At that meeting the groups were attempting to put together where we would go in the future, and the direction was to go as a professional organization, but to be sure that we kept the support for one another going. In October of 1976, October 17th through the 19th, we had a P.O.D. conference at the Airlie House in Virginia and there were 230 people in attendance.

My secretary and I at the Faculty Development Resource Center ran everything out of my office that year for P.O.D. To be fair, we ran a lot of it out of our own budget. I’m sure that wasn’t too unusual because P.O.D. wasn’t really too established and we didn’t have a lot of members. Our conference that year was October 26th, 1977, at Illinois Beach State Park in Zion, Illinois. That was the conference where I think we really began focusing on becoming a national professional association. We also met that year in March at the American Association of Higher Education. We had our business meetings there and then we had our annual conference in October. I was on the Core committee through 1982. And then my center at the university formally closed in 1985. And somewhere in there the Core committee voted to have all former Executive Directors made life-time members. So I have maintained membership.

There was a lot of interest at that time whether we were faculty developers, instructional developers or organizational developers. By the time we had our brochure out in probably 1980, it was called the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education.

**Burdick:** What about the Core committee? Did that exist under Joan North’s leadership or did that begin with yours?

**Crow:** I don’t remember. There was a leadership group that worked with Joan and I don’t know if they called themselves a Core committee or not. I know that it was formally called the Core committee and they formally elected the Executive Director starting when I was elected. They may have called it the Core committee before that.

**Burdick:** The initial meeting at Airlie House had more people there than were present at P.O.D. for a number of years afterwards. Why do you think that was?

**Crow:** I think it was because it was new and exciting. I think the excitement about being able to really make changes in higher education was just wonderful. Most of us who had been involved in this for a long time knew that even the work that we did on our campuses was controversial. Faculty would charge us with trying to interfere with their “academic freedom”, about how they taught. They would make fun of people trying to teach faculty members how to teach or how to do anything because they had their doctorate. I’m 73, and I can tell you that in the many years I have been in higher education the focus originally was and has been for many years how much you knew not how well you could teach it or facilitate its acquisition by your students. It has grown more so unfortunately through the years. So to challenge that and say it wasn’t what you knew but how you were able to teach it, that was new then. And a lot of us who were involved in and were discouraged by what was going on at universities and in higher education, we found it exhilarating that we could actually make a change. Not only were we pioneers but we got a lot of flak, a lot of flak. I mean I got hate letters.

**Burdick:** What kind of things were they saying?

**Crow:** Just that nobody had a right to talk to them about how to teach. In Texas for example, we have so many state and national standards. Everything that we do is under some kind of scrutiny by some kind of government agency. But the thought back in the 1960s and 1970s that somebody outside the professors would have anything to say about what they did in the classroom was seen as just anarchy. Fortunately, I had a Vice President and Provost who hired me. I worked directly for him and he supported me. But it was pressure at work. It was all covering new ground, not just what we did but the attitude towards it.

**Burdick:** What other service responsibilities did you have in P.O.D.?

**Crow:** I think that in the early years, not only did we all actually bring this movement into birth with each of us playing different roles, but we all tried to spread it across the country. I was looking at my calendars from 1974 through 1978 before talking to you and at least once a month I was at a different campus across the country giving presentations and speeches, helping set up centers. Not just as Executive Director, but just as one of the early directors in the field. They were always looking for people to help them set up their centers, to help them motivate their faculty, to provide ideas. So the whole group of us I feel like in many ways we were ground breakers and were called upon to go all over the place as people who were selling a new idea. And so our calendars were full, at least mine was. I was all

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*Continued on page 8*

Dakin Burdick, (Endicott College), is POD’s Historian.
As is often the case in difficult economic times, we hear of positions cut, programs cancelled, and reductions in teaching staff. Especially in these times, it strikes me that higher education has not done a stellar job of protecting its human resources. On occasion, I have even heard policy and practices referred to as “inhumane.” The first question, of course, is “Who are these human resources?”

I believe that we have to answer that question by first considering the primary goals and mission of higher/tertiary education and then, by identifying those who are primarily responsible for carrying out that mission.

Mission statements include language about the production, translation, dissemination, integration, and application of knowledge. Clearly, the faculty are charged with those traditional responsibilities on a daily basis. Others contribute, but not to the same degree of involvement. Other mission statement language suggests responsibility for the personal, ethical, and social development of students who, as a result of their education, adopt a mode of lifelong learning and become informed, productive, and caring members of society. Broad demands for “accountability” have increased the pressure on education to address these goals, and these aspects of the mission require contributions from many staff in addition faculty.

Of course, organizational structure and operational efficiency are required to keep these efforts moving, but ultimately, the success or failure of education depends on the faculty.

I hasten to add that from a different perspective, students are also critical human resources. However, their responsibilities are different, and their mission is to be engaged in their education and benefit as much as they can from what the institution provides. Thus, I would like to keep this brief discussion to the issues surrounding the faculty.

Research from management and related business fields, to which we sometimes don’t pay enough attention, can inform our understanding. For example, the work of David McClelland and associates clearly identified the need to consider individual differences and strengths in order to place people in positions where they can be most effective. John Holland’s typologies (especially as translated to educational settings by John Smart and Kenneth Feldman) provide strong evidence that when their individual interests and styles match those of the disciplines, students have greater success. George Mild proposed a similar idea in his discussion of managerial success. He said that one often enters a professional field with high levels of interest, commitment, enthusiasm, and expertise that lead to success. However, success leads to upward mobility into positions that distance individuals from what they liked best and did well. New requirements may not mesh well with the array of skills that led to prior success. The result is often disappointment and a desire to return to familiar ground.

Only when individuals have the motivation, develop new skills, and have a need to advance, are these new positions comfortable.

So, how does all this relate to faculty? It begins as one matriculates from graduate school, where the overwhelming focus is on “becoming a _____,” a professional in a discipline. For those interested in higher education however, graduation means stepping into a new world where one’s expertise now seems at entry level and one’s disciplinary interests and desires may have to share time and energy with other responsibilities for which one may be ill prepared: for example, teaching, administrative, and service responsibilities. Humane policy and practice require that these issues should be kept in mind.

Lately, colleagues and I have been referring to college teaching as a “Meta-Profession”, one which requires a solid “base profession” (in one’s discipline) but which carries the need to be very proficient in a wide array of other skills. Institutions hiring new people to enter the college teaching profession, often expect them to possess or develop these meta-professional skills. This expectation is documented in the research literature of the past two decades which has noted an increasing sense of isolation among faculty (especially new faculty), accompanied by increasing pressure to excel in all areas of performance. Some institutions have responded by providing additional resources for professional development, but this encouraging note is tempered by the hard economic fact that many institutions have fewer resources to give.

Professional/educational development does not need to be costly, however. One of the most effective mechanisms for promoting improvement and enhancing productivity is simply to insure that our critical human resources have sufficient time to work together to construct shared

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Burdick: What do you think that the faculty that are being recruited are better prepared to teach or more interested in teaching?

Crow: Part of it might be the fact that they themselves have been in classrooms that are more student-centered. There is more active learning going on. They seem more committed to that kind of thing than some scholarly folks who were coming in, in earlier days. Maybe it is not too optimistic for me to say, but a lot of units are requiring people who interview for teaching positions to actually teach a lesson before they hire them. I think that’s a step forward.

Burdick: Why do you think education itself.

When we remember our most likely to emerge as leaders are the faculty. When we remember our critical human resources, and when we provide humane treatment and opportunities for them to emerge as leaders, we are sustaining not only our institutions, but education itself.

Researchers honored with Menges Award

The Robert J. Menges Award for Outstanding Research in Educational Development was established in recognition of Bob Menges, an honored scholar, rigorous researcher and consummate mentor. The awards recognize original research, quantitative or qualitative, that leads to systematic investigation and evidence based conclusions.

Sally Kuhlenschmidt (Western Kentucky University) was recognized for her work compiling a master list of Centers and data about them, entitled, “Where are Centers for Teaching and Learning? Implications for Strategic Planning and Research.” The most comprehensive project of its kind so far, the list includes nearly 900 centers in the U.S. and some international data as well. The Menges Award Committee especially valued the rigor, reliability, and usefulness of the data, as well as its comprehensive scope.

Dieter Schönwetter (University of Manitoba) and Donna Ellis (University of Waterloo) were recognized for their work on graduate student professional development. Their survey shows us what competencies we have been emphasizing collectively and what faculty members need to help graduate students develop those competencies. This research makes a valuable contribution to the field of graduate student professional development. The team of Genevieve Shaker, Megan Palmer and Nancy Chism, from Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis were recognized for studying full time non-tenure track instructors. Combining rigorous qualitative and quantitative research with an extensive literature review, they provide a profile of this important group of educators whom we serve.

~Mary-Ann Winkelmes, Menges Committee Chair

Donna Ellis, Mary-Ann Winkelmes, Dieter Schönwetter
2009 Innovation Award Focuses on Newly Tenured Faculty

Deborah DeZure, working with Cindi Young and Allyn Shaw at the Office of Organizational and Faculty Development at Michigan State University, developed a new twist on an old standard: An Orientation Program for Newly Tenured Faculty Members. This concept received the POD Innovation Award top spot for 2009. The 2009 POD Innovation Award was given to Deborah, Cindi, and Allyn at the annual POD conference, held this year in Houston, Texas.

Innovation Idea Awards are presented each year at the annual POD conference to honor faculty developers who have implemented creative ideas for the enhancement of teaching and learning and/or faculty development. The winning submission is a half-day university-wide orientation to the mid-career experience for newly tenured faculty. The program clarifies expectations, policies and procedures for promotion to professor and identifies challenges and opportunities of the mid-career experience. The content is based on a study of mid-career faculty experiences; expectations, relevant policies and procedures; and advice from senior administrators, deans, and chairs who participate in promotion decisions and newly promoted professors.

Seven POD Innovation Finalist Awards were also given at the conference ceremony, with innovations including writing the pedagogical component of a grant proposal, Susanna Calkins and Denise Drane, Northwestern University; audio programs broadcasting conversations about teaching and learning with practitioners from around the world, Elizabeth Yost Hammer and Bart Everson, Xavier University; a worksheet that allows professors to synthesize student evaluations data from numerous courses and semesters, Pamela Milloy, Grand View University; a wiki that provides a structure for our Course and Curriculum Design Institutes, Kathryn Plank and Teresa A. Johnson, The Ohio State University; a program that combines faculty development with student support, Susan Pliner and Ruth Shields, Hobart and William Smith Colleges; the development of the Resource Guide for New Faculty, Karen E. Santos and Carol A. Hurney, James Madison University; and the development of an on-line Midcourse Evaluation Tool, John Taylor, Brigham Young University.

Information about the finalists, as well summaries of all winning entries since the award was established, can be found at the POD Innovation Award website: http://www.wku.edu/teaching/db/podbi/

Todd Zakrajsek University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) have proven successful in producing teaching projects, as evidenced by a survey of institutions with FLCs. It follows that these groups should provide ideal conditions for a subsequent development of those projects into peer-reviewed publications and presentations, or the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). This essay offers faculty practical advice for producing such SoTL products based on what started as a teaching project in an FLC. My advice is based on work with FLCs for 28 years on my campus and others (Cox, 2003).

Let us begin by considering a definition of SoTL and FLCs. When Boyer introduced SoTL in 1990, there was confusion about its meaning. Our teaching center at Miami University defined SoTL as peer-reviewed presentations or publications on teaching and learning and relied on this illustration at right to depict the multiple ways one could move toward either a publication or presentation after beginning with a teaching problem or opportunity. This cycle, adapted from Richlin (1993), describes scholarly teaching projects (as pictured in the upper half) that culminate in SoTL (as pictured in the lower part). For detailed discussion, see Cox (2008).

An FLC is a special type of community of practice. FLCs are multidisciplinary groups of 8-12 members consisting of faculty or a mix of faculty, graduate students, and administrative professionals. They work collaboratively on year-long, scholarly projects to enhance and assess teaching and learning. Group activities include tri-weekly seminars during which projects are developed and shared with the goal of building capacity and developing competence in SoTL. Participants select a focus course in which to try out their innovations. They also assess resulting outcomes, including student learning, and may prepare a mini-portfolio to chronicle results. They may select and work with student associates to engage student perspectives. Finally, they present individual and/or group project results to their institutions and at conferences.

Teaching Projects

The starting point for developing SoTL in an FLC is a teaching project, problem or opportunity involving student learning, often called Classroom Research (Cross, 1998). This project may involve an attempt to change student behavior by adding a new pedagogical approach, content, assessment, or curriculum. It may involve an innovative approach to a course learning-objective that is currently problematic, such as moving from lectures to cooperative groups; engaging problem-based learning in a course; adding a case study approach; introducing a service-learning component; addressing a variety of learning styles; using responders; engaging web-based or online components; or having students construct electronic course learning portfolios. Another type of FLC teaching project may address institutional challenges or opportunities, for example: the first-year experience; advising; inclusion; or transforming the overall approach to learning. Such projects have been the focus of topic-
Based on our experiences at Miami University, I have compiled the following set of recommendations both for developing teaching projects and for moving them beyond one's institutional boundaries: design before you start; keep your colleagues, department chair, and students informed about your project; obtain IRB (Human Subjects) approval in case you want to present or publish results; keep it simple, especially if you are a relatively new faculty member (since new approaches could lead temporarily to lower student evaluations); find a support group of others developing teaching/learning projects, such as an FLC.

Presenting and Publishing SoTL

Every discipline has a culture of conference presentations. Presentations of SoTL at a traditional disciplinary conference usually take place in a teaching section of the conference and conform to the culture established in the discipline. However, as a relatively new field, SoTL is developing its own culture. Sample venues of interest at recent conferences, visit conference websites. The Miami Lilly Conference website lists over 30 theme tracks (topics of 5 or more sessions along with titles and abstracts).

I recommend that session presenters have handouts, including Powerpoint slides and references and allow around 20% of your presentation time for questions and discussion since participants want to share what they are doing. Also, model your topic (e.g., if your session is about cooperative learning, have participants engage in an exercise during your session). Include student work and include assessment results. Session evaluations provide feedback for improving your project and scholarly approach.

There are an increasing number of print and/or online venues for publishing SoTL in disciplinary or multidisciplinary journals. For our journal, the Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, which has been publishing peer-reviewed SoTL for 18 years, we receive many manuscripts that describe interesting teaching projects. Unfortunately, we have to turn many away because the author fails to define the problem clearly or indicate why it was a problem or he fails to establish a baseline or fails to place the project in the context of what others have done or to provide evidence of change. Members of an FLC can read each other's manuscripts critically and call attention to these shortcomings early in the project design when it is too late to revise the approach.

Resources for Supporting SoTL Development

The development of SoTL projects in FLCs works best if participants understand the definition of SoTL and are familiar with SoTL publications themselves or with journal peer review procedures or if they are engaged with topics currently under discussion (see Lilly Conference presentation theme tracks). Consultation with the institution's offices of assessment and institutional research, and inclusion of suggestions from colleagues in psychology and educational psychology can strengthen the evidentiary base of a project. However, we have found that the most effective support comes from fellow members in an FLC, who provide insights, encouragement, and a critical perspective.

At first, some faculty doubt that they can become SoTL experts in a short time because it took them several years to become experts in their disciplines. However, Classroom Research is designed for the intelligent non-expert. There is not much jargon and progress reports and follow-up projects are still acceptable for presentations. We have found that faculty in FLCs can develop into SoTL presenters in just one year. Interestingly, pre-tenure faculty members, in their second through fifth years who are members of our teaching scholars FLC have entered SoTL development as novices and have presented the results of their teaching projects at a national conference 8 months later.

A survey conducted in 2005 with 395 respondents (a 61% response rate) produced interesting findings regarding the impact of FLCs on participants. “Understanding of and interest in SoTL” ranked third as a result of FLC participation. Also, those surveyed reported the following teaching projects: revised a course (160), incorporated approaches to teach different learning styles (150), designed and employed technology in a course (141), designed guidelines for learning processes (123), and improved grading schemes or rubrics (110). Our FIPSE-funded project fast-tracked the start of FLC programs at 5 institutions.

FLCs can provide for a very productive environment for the development of SoTL. Palmer (1998) notes, “The growth of any craft depends on shared practice and honest dialogue among the people who do it. We grow by private trial and error, to be sure—but our willingness to try, and fail, as individuals is severely limited when we are not supported by a community that encourages such risks” (p. 144). To obtain more detailed information about FLCs and their role in developing SoTL, see Cox (2003a & 2003b).

References


Milton D. Cox (Ph.D., Indiana University) is University Director, Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, Miami University, and Editor-in-Chief, Journal on Excellence in College Teaching.
Contacting the POD Office

It is our goal at the POD office to respond to members’ questions, concerns, needs, and interests as courteously and promptly as possible. Please contact us at the address below if we can assist you.

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**Editor:** Niki Young, Director  
Center for Teaching and Learning  
Western Oregon University  
345 N. Monmouth Avenue  
Monmouth, OR 97361 U.S.A.  
(503) 838-8895  
(503) 838-8474 - Fax  
youngn@wou.edu

**Graphic Designer:** Sue Payton  
Center for Teaching and Learning  
Western Oregon University  
345 N. Monmouth Avenue  
Monmouth, OR 97361 U.S.A.  
(503) 838-8967  
(503) 838-8474 - Fax  
paytons@wou.edu

**Publisher:** Hoag Holmgren, Executive Director  
POD Network  
P.O. Box 3318  
Nederland, Colorado 80466 U.S.A.  
(303) 258-9521  
(303) 258-7377 - Fax  
podoffice@podnetwork.org

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Contact the POD Office at:

POD Network  
P.O. Box 3318  
Nederland, Colorado 80466  
Phone - (303) 258-9521  
Fax - (303) 258-7377  
e-mail - podoffice@podnetwork.org

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Nederland, CO 80466 U.S.A.